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FORCE of ARMS

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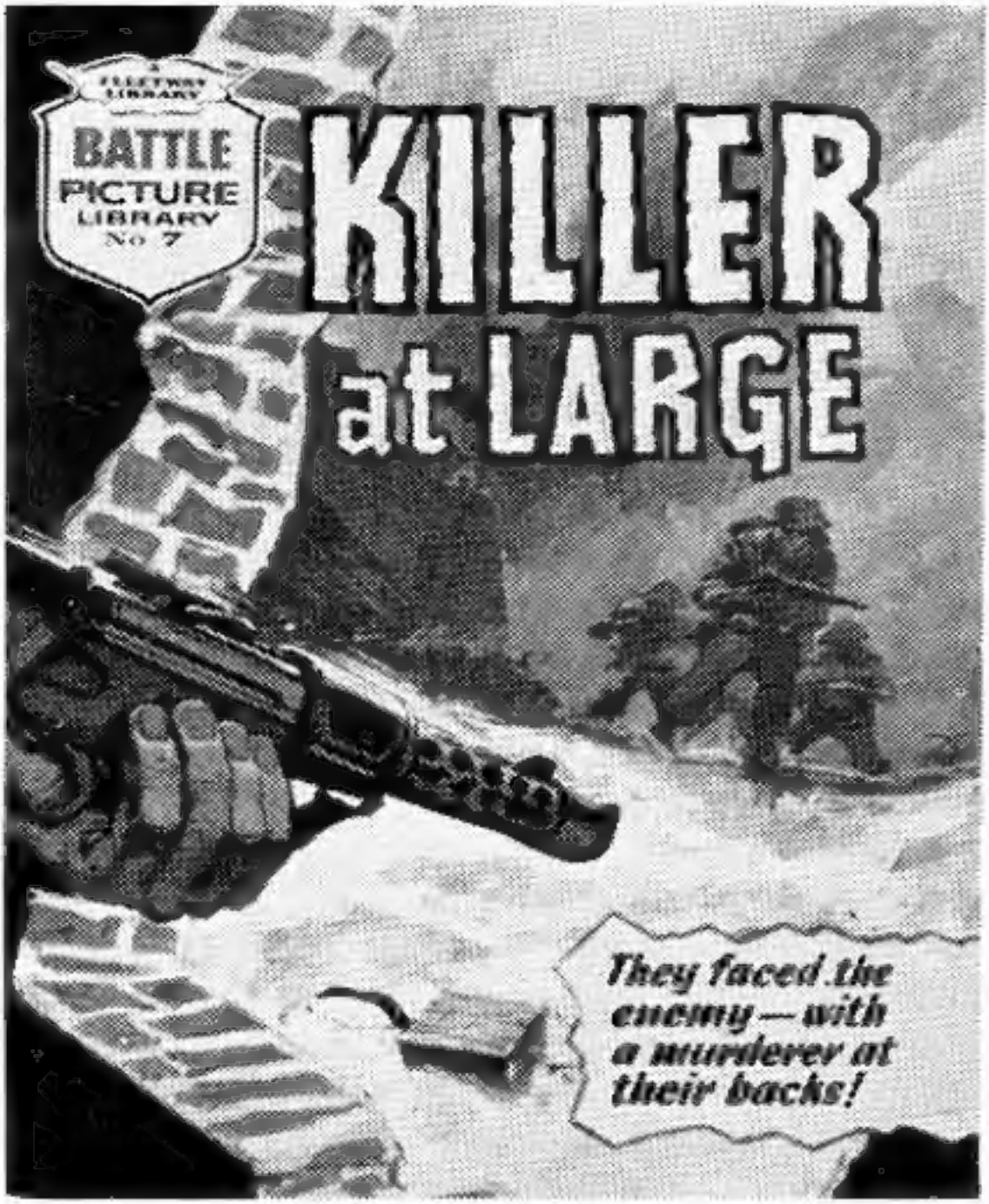

TWO Dramatic, All-action Issues Every Month

Force of Arms

BY THE SPRING OF 1942, MUSSOLINI'S UNWILLING DESERT ARMY WERE OUT OF THE NORTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGN, BUT A TITANIC STRUGGLE STILL RAGED BETWEEN BRITAIN'S STUBBORN DESERT RATS AND ROMMEL'S TENACIOUS AFRIKA KORPS. RELENTLESSLY THEY WRESTLED FOR CONTROL OF THE BLISTERING, NEUTRAL LIBYAN SANDS.

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Chapter 1. RETREAT

THE BATTLE WAS FOR A NARROW STRIP OF HARD SAND KNOWN AS SIR SAHABI – A CAUSEWAY CROSSING THE SOFT SEAS OF SAND IMPASSABLE TO MOTORISED TRAFFIC. A PULVERISING ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENT OPENED THE ACTION. . .

SEEMS TO ME THE JERRY GUNNERS DON'T CARE WHETHER THEY 'IT OUR BOYS OR THEIR OWN!

TRUST THEM TO SMELL OUT A WEAK SECTOR...NO ARTILLERY AND NO BLOOMIN' TANKS.

WATCH IT, LADS! 'ERE THEY COME AGAIN!

THE GERMAN INFANTRYMEN ADVANCED THROUGH TANGLED SCRUB AND BETWEEN SCATTERED BOULDERS . . .

GREAT GAPS WERE TORN IN THE ENEMY LINE BUT STILL THEY CAME ON, THREATENING TO OVER-RUN THE FOX-HOLES OF THE FORWARD BRITISH POSITIONS.
ONE... TWO... THREE...
WITH STEADY HANDS, INFANTRYMAN DUFFY ROBERTS EXTRACTED THE PIN FROM A GRENADE AND BEGAN TO COUNT. . .
...FOUR!
LUMME, DUFFY, I THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER LET IT GO!

THE DESERT RATS THREW BACK THAT FIRST WAVE OF INFANTRY AND FIVE MINUTES LATER, THE GERMANS, RETREATED INTO THE DUST AND SMOKE OF BATTLE.
IT SEEMS AS IF THEY'VE HAD ENOUGH FOR NOW, DUFFY.
NOW I 'SPOSE WE WAIT FOR ANOTHER SHELLIN' BEFORE THEY TRY AGAIN.

IF YOU ASK ME, DUFFY'S ROUND THE BEND. FANCY TURNIN' UP A CUSHY DRIVIN' NUMBER IN THE SERVICE CORPS TO GET 'IMSELF SHOT UP IN A TRENCH LIKE THIS!
'E COULD 'AVE A REASON, I SUPPOSE. MAYBE 'E DON'T LIKE THOSE NASTY 'UNHEALTHY PETROL FUMES.

DURING THE LULL 'AN AMBULANCE HAD MOVED UP INTO THE COVER OF ROCKS ONLY YARDS BEHIND THE TRENCHES. HASTILY, THE BADLY WOUNDED WERE LOADED ABOARD . . .
HEY! YOU IN THE AMBULANCE. HOLD ON. 'ERE'S ANOTHER.

THE AMBULANCE DRIVER WAITED ALTHOUGH EVERY SECOND INCREASED THE PERIL OF HIS WOUNDED CARGO.
ALL RIGHT, MATE, TAKE HER AWAY.
STILL NO WORD OVER THE WIRELESS, SIR?
IF WE DON'T GET SOME SUPPORT SHORTLY THEIR TANKS ARE GOING TO COME THROUGH AND MAKE MINCEMEAT OF US.

THE ACTIVITY AROUND THE AMBULANCE HAD NOT ESCAPED THE NOTICE OF THE GERMAN ARTILLERY COMMANDER COVERING THAT SECTOR OF THE FRONT.
ACHTUNG! THERE GOES A VEHICLE. A BOTTLE OF SCHNAPPS TO THE FIRST GUNNER TO HIT IT!
BUT, HERR HAUPTMANN, IT IS AN AMBULANCE, I CAN SEE THE RED CROSS FROM HERE!
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SILENCE, DOG - DO AS YOU ARE ORDERED!

NEXT MOMENT, AN ACCURATE SALVO OF SHELLS STRADDLED THE HAPLESS VEHICLE . . .
STONE ME . . . THE BLIGHTERS 'AVE 'IT THE AMBULANCE. COME ON, CORP!

SHELL FRAGMENTS HAD RIPPED ONE OF THE REAR TYRES TO TATTERS OF USELESS RUBBER. AS DUFFY RACED UP TO THE AMBULANCE, HE YELLED TO THE DRIVER TO PRODUCE A LIFTING JACK AND MINUTES LATER . . .
LUMME! I'VE NEVER SEEN A TYRE CHANGED SO QUICK!
'ERE SHE COMES, CORP . . . LET'S 'AVE THE SPARE. CHOP! CHOP!

STILL, SHELLS BURST AROUND THE MOTIONLESS VEHICLE BUT IT ESCAPED FURTHER DAMAGE AND IN AN AMAZINGLY SHORT TIME, IT WAS READY TO GO AGAIN. . .
GET TO HECK OUT O' HERE, MATE!
I'M GOING! I DON'T HAVE TO BE TOLD TWICE!

THE BARRAGE SWITCHED TO THE TRENCHES AGAIN, INCREASING IN INTENSITY TO AN EAR-BATTERING CRESCENDO. INEVITABLY, OTHER CASUALTIES OCCURRED. CAPTAIN EVANS, THE SENIOR OFFICER PRESENT, BEGAN TO FEEL THE EYES OF HIS N.C.O.'s ON HIM.
WE'LL NEVER STOP THEM WHEN THEY COME AGAIN, SIR - WE'RE LOSING TOO MANY MEN.
I'M AFRAID YOU'RE RIGHT, ROGERS. SEE IF YOU CAN CONTACT BRIGADE ON THE WIRELESS. GIVE 'EM THE FULL FACTS AND ASK FOR INSTRUCTIONS.

DARTING THROUGH THE CEASELESS BARRAGE, LIEUTENANT ROGERS REACHED THE WIRELESS TRUCK UNSCATHED. . .
I'M SORRY, SIR, IT'S NO USE! THE SET'S DEAD! I WAS JUST COMING OVER TO TELL THE O.C.
THAT JUST ABOUT DOES IT, THEN. WE'RE COMPLETELY ON OUR OWN!

CAPTAIN EVANS HEARD THE REPORT WITHOUT EMOTION. . .
I'VE SAID BEFORE, THE UNIT ISN'T COMPLETE WITHOUT A WIRELESS TECHNICIAN, AS WELL AS AN OPERATOR. VERY WELL THEN, I MUST MAKE MY OWN DECISION. HAVE THE DRIVER START THE TRUCK UP, AND PASS THE WORD FOR THE WOUNDED TO BE PUT IN THE BACK. WE'RE PULLING OUT!

BUT WHEN THE DRIVER TRIED TO START THE TRUCK'S ENGINE. . .
IT'S NO GOOD, SIR. THERE'S NOT A PEEP OUT OF HER!
HEY! GIVE ME THE STARTING HANDLE!

WHILE THE LIEUTENANT WORKED ON THE STARTING HANDLE, THREE BRITISH BOMBERS FLEW PAST TOWARDS THE ENEMY POSITIONS.
STRIKES ME THE 'AIRCREAM' BOYS AVE FOT A BIT AFT ON AN COD!
WE'RE RIGHT THERE CHARLIE BOY KNOW WHAT THINK IF WE'RE GOIN TO GET OUT OF THIS FOR WE HAVE TO WALK!

WHEN THE LIEUTENANT HAD NO MORE LUCK THAN THE DRIVER IN STARTING THE TRUCK, THE CAPTAIN TACKLED HIS FIT SURVIVORS.
ANY OF YOU KNEW ABOUT TRUCKS? IF WE DON'T GET THIS STARTED WE'LL ALL BE IN JERRY'S BAG COME ON SPEAK UP!
PRIVATE ROBERTS YOUR MAN, CAPTAIN. HE USED TO RUN HIS OWN GARAGE!
OH HECK! LOOKS AS IF I'M BACK ON TRANSPORT WHETHER I LIKE IT OR NOT.

WITH A LOOK OF RESIGNATION ON HIS FACE, DUFFY WALKED ROUND THE FRONT OF THE TRUCK AND HEAVED UP THE BONNET.
WELL, DUFFY, IS IT ANY GOOD OR NOT?
MIGHT BE ABLE TO GET 'ER GOIN IN A FEW MINUTES, SIR PERHAPS THE REST OF YOU OUGHT TO PUSH ON THE REGULAR DRIVER AN' ME COULD BRING THE WOUNDED ALONG, IF IT'S NO GO.

ACTING ON DUFFY'S SUGGESTION, THE CAPTAIN LED HIS MEN AWAY TO THE EAST. IN THE BACK THE WOUNDED SWEATED IT OUT WHILE DUFFY STRUGGLED WITH THE PETROL FEED SYSTEM.
I DON'T FIGURE SHE'S WORTH IT, DUFFY. IN FACT, SHE'S THE AWKWARDEST CUSS I'VE COME ACROSS ON FOUR WHEELS.
ONE OF THOSE THAT NEED A BIT OF COAXIN', I EXPECT.

AFTER STALLING A COUPLE OF TIMES THE ENGINE STARTED AND THE TRUCK ROLLED FORWARD ALMOST RELUCTANTLY UNDER DUFFY'S PRACTISED HANDS.
DON'T YOU THINK YOU MADE A DAFT MOVE WHEN YOU LEFT THE R.A.S.C FOR THIS MOB, DUFFY
MY OLD MAN FOUGHT IN THE INFANTRY IN THE FOURTEEN-EIGHTEEN WAR - E EVEN WON A MEDAL. WHAT WAS GOOD ENOUGH FOR 'IM IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME!

THEY SOON OVERTOOK THE REST OF THEIR PARTY MARCHING RESOLUTELY ON FOOT
NICE GOIN, DUFFY KNEW YOU'D FIX IT
COR, STRIKE A LIGHT, SOME BLOKES DON'T 'ALF 'AVE IT CUSHY
AS THE LADEN TRUCK MOVED ON, LIEUTENANT ROGERS SOUGHT OUT A VANTAGE POINT AND FOCUSED HIS BINOCULARS THE WAY THEY HAD COME
JERRYS ON THE MOVE AGAIN WONDER IF THEY'VE RUMBLED THE FACT WE'VE PULLED OUT

MEANWHILE, HALF A MILE AHEAD OF THE WALKING TROOPS, THE TRUCK HAD LURCHED TO A HALT AGAIN - ITS ENGINE SILENT
I TOLD YOU THE OLD BATTLE-AXE WASN'T WORTH IT, CHUM.
DON'T THINK I DON'T BELIEVE YOU, MATE WOULDN'T AVE BOTHERED IF IT AIN'T BEEN FOR THE WOUNDED

WHEN THE CAPTAIN CAME UP WITH THEM, DUFFY FOUND - TO HIS DISGUST - THAT THE OFFICER WAS STILL IN THE SAME FRAME OF MIND ABOUT THE TRUCK
JUST MAKE ONE MORE EFFORT DUFFY, THEN IF SHE'S NO USE...
IF YOU SAY SO, SIR BUT I THINK IT WOULD BE BEST TO GET THE OTHERS OUT OF 'ER NOW THIS IS GOIN' TO TAKE TIME
I THINK HE'S RIGHT, SIR THE ENEMY'S GOT TWO MOBILE COLUMNS ON OUR TAIL

THE FIT MEN SUPPORTING THE WOUNDED, THE SOLDIERS TRAMPED ON, LEAVING DUFFY ALONE WITH THE OBSTINATE VEHICLE. HE PEERED MOODILY AT THE OILY, OVERHEATED ENGINE, . .
HANG IT! WHY SHOULD I SWEAT TO GET THIS PERISHIN OLD WRECK GOIN'? I'M AN INFANTRYMAN - NOT A DRIVER! I'LL SLASH ONE OF THE RADIATOR HOSES AND PUT IT OUT OF ACTION - AND THEN LET AFTER THE BOYS
DUFFY DID HIS MINOR ACT OF SABOTAGE WITH HIS BAYONET AND TURNED HIS BACK ON THE DISABLED TRUCK
'EAVEN 'ELP ANY POOR KRAUT WHO'S DETAILED TO TAKE YOU OVER, YOU NO GOOD JALOPY!

Chapter 2. STUKA TARGET

MEANWHILE, ONE OF THE TWIN GERMAN COLUMNS IN PURSUIT HAD ARRIVED AT THE BRITISH INFANTRY'S EVACUATED POSITION.

ACCOMPANIED BY HIS OFFICERS, THE GERMAN COMMANDER STEPPED FORWARD TO EXAMINE THE AREA WHERE H.G. INFANTRY HAD RECENTLY BEEN REPULSED.

NOT MANY ENGLANDERS CAN HAVE ESCAPED SHOULD WE DIG IN HERE, HERR OBERST?

ON THE CONTRARY, ADLER, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE PURSUE THEM IN FORCE. IT IS VITAL TO THE GENERAL'S PLAN THAT THE ENGLANDERS BELIEVE THIS TO BE OUR MAIN ATTACK

GET BACK TO YOUR VEHICLES AT ONCE. WE SHALL PURSUE THESE SURVIVORS FOR ANOTHER TEN MILES, IF NECESSARY THEY WILL BE ANNIHILATED, OR TAKEN PRISONER!

IT WAS NOT LONG BEFORE THE GERMAN COLUMN CAME UP WITH THE ABANDONED BRITISH TRUCK.
NOT MUCH FARTHER TO GO NOW, SCHILLER. THE ENGLANDERS WILL NO DOUBT BE ON FOOT.

AHEAD OF THE GERMANS, CAPTAIN EVANS' WEARY PARTY SOON NOTICED THE BILLOWING CLOUD OF DUST ON THE SKYLINE
THEY'LL BE UP WITH US IN TEN MINUTES - AT THE MOST. WE'VE GOT TO TAKE COVER - OR SURRENDER!
THE OFFICERS MADE A RAPID SURVEY OF THE TERRAIN AHEAD OF THEM A FEW HUNDRED YARDS AWAY A DUNE TOPPED WITH BOULDERS OFFERED THE BEST SHELTER FOR DEFENCE
MAKE FOR THOSE ROCKS, LADS - AS QUICK AS YOU CAN! JERRY'S ON OUR HEELS!
I WONDER IF WE CAN OLD 'EM UP A B->

AS THE MEN QUICKENED THEIR PACE - THE FT HELPING THE WOUNDED - DUFFY TURNED BACK TO THE OFFICERS . . .
IT WOULD GIVE US A BIT MORE TIME IF A COUPLE OF US ROLLED A FEW BOULDERS DOWN ON TO THE TRACK SR
A CAPITAL IDEA, DUFFY, BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO WORK FAST I'LL SEND BACK CORPORAL WICKS TO GIVE YOU A HAND

WORKING ON THEIR LAST RESERVES OF BORROWED ENERGY, THE TWO DETERMINED MEN SWEATED AND STRAINED TO MAKE THE TRACK IMPASSABLE TO ALL VEHICLES.
SHE'S GOIN, DUFFY, KEEP-KEEP PUSHIN'!

BY THE TIME THE TWO MEN HAD MANHANDLED SEVERAL GREAT BOULDERS ON TO THE TRACK, THE REST OF THE PARTY HAD REACHED A DEFENSIVE POSITION.
BY JOVE, SIR THAT PAR DOWN THERE HAVE DONE A WONDERFUL JOB!
THEY HAVE, INDEED — AND HERE COMES JERRY!

THE THUNDER OF THE ARMOURED CAR'S ENGINE HAD FOREWARNED WICKS AND DUFFY AND THEY HURLED THEMSELVES INTO THE NEAREST COVER. A MERE THIRTY YARDS AWAY, THE FIRST ENEMY VEHICLE ROLLED TO A HALT.
CURSE THESE STUBBORN ENGLANDERS! THEY NEVER KNOW WHEN THEY'RE BEATEN, LEUTNANT, YOU MUST DRIVE ROUND THE OBSTRUCTION THERE'S JUST ROOM, IF YOU'RE CAREFUL

CORPORAL WICKS GRUNTED IN DISGUST. . .
STONE ME, THE BLIGHTERS ARE GOIN TO SLIP THROUGH, AFTER ALL?
THAT'S WHAT THEY THINK?

THE CHEERY GRIN LEFT DUFFY'S FACE FOR A MOMENT AS HE CONCENTRATED ON HIS AIM. HIS GRENADE LANDED ACCURATELY UNDER THE CAR, BEHIND THE NEAR FRONT WHEEL.
AAAH!

EVEN AS THE GRENADE EXPLODED, HICKS LOOSED A DEADLY HAIL OF BULLETS FROM HIS BREN AT THE STAFF CAR THE GERMAN COLONEL PROMPTLY DROPPED FROM VIEW.
THAT'S GIVEN 'EM SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT!
BUT THE BATTLE-TRIED MEN OF THE AFRIKA KORPS SOON RECOVERED FROM THE INITIAL SHOCK AND STARTED TO FIGHT BACK
AFTER 'EM SCHNELL! SHOOT THE DOGS DOWN!

GOADED BY THEIR OFFICERS THE GERMAN INFANTRYMEN SWARMED OVER THE ROCKS
THERE'S MORE OF 'EM COMIN' STRAIGHT UP THE TRACK WE'LL HAVE TO MAKE A DASH FOR IT YOU GO AN' I'LL COVER YOU.
NOT ON YOUR LIFE, CORP THE SECOND RUN WOULD BE TOO RISKY WE'LL BOTH GO TOGETHER
A FEW SECONDS LATER, THE TWO DESPERATE MEN SPRINTED ACROSS THE OPEN TRACK. . .
FOOLS! THERE THEY ARE! GET AFTER THEM!

BUT AS THE GERMANS FLUNG THEMSELVES AFTER DUFFY AND WICKS, THE REST OF THE BRITISH PARTY POURED A WITHERING FIRE AT THEM THE TIME FOR CONCEALMENT WAS OVER
LET 'EM HAVE IT, LADS—WHILE THEY'RE STILL EXPOSED
FOR OVER AN HOUR THE BRITISH CONTINUED TO INFLICT HEAVY CASUALTIES ON THE ATTACKERS, ALTHOUGH THEIR POSITION WAS GRADUALLY BECOMING SURROUNDED.
WE'RE ALMOST SURROUNDED AND STILL THREE HOURS OF DAYLIGHT LEFT!
SPREAD OUT AND KEEP MOVING

WITH THEIR NUMBERS REDUCED TO TWELVE, THE BRITISH STILL FOUGHT ON - IT WAS THE SIGHT OF THREE DIVE BOMBERS APPROACHING WHICH FINALLY KILLED THEIR STUBBORN LAST HOPES.
STUKAS!
WE'RE SITTING TARGETS— THEY CAN BLAST US TO KINGDOM COME AND THERE'S PRACTICALLY NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT!
THE LEADING DIVE BOMBER SOON ADDED ITS NERVE-SHATTERING WHINE TO THE INTERMITTENT CLATTER OF SMALL ARMS FIRE.
QUITE AN INTERESTING TARGET, THAT RING OF ROCKS, KURT!
BOMBS AWAY!. HEADS DOWN!

ONE BOMB EXPLODED ON THE TRACK AND THE OTHER FELL JUST WIDE OF THE BRITISH POSITION CAUSING A MINOR AVALANCHE AMONG THE GERMAN INFANTRY
HEY, DUFFY, TAKE A LOOK AT THOSE JERRIES! THEY'RE GOIN' OVER LIKE NINEPINS - THEIR OWN BOMBS TOO!
A CHEERY RETORT DIED ON DUFFY'S LIPS AS HE TURNED AND CAUGHT SIGHT OF WHAT CAPTAIN EVANS WAS DOING
WHAT - WHAT THE HECK?
CAN'T JUST LET THEM WIPE YOU OUT LADS THIS USELESS STRIP OF SAND ISN'T WORTH IT PLEASE FIRE!
THE TERRIBLE RACKET OF NAKED GUNFIRE SWINDLED AWAY INTO SILENCE.
ORDER YOUR MEN TO THROW DOWN THEIR WEAPONS AND STAND CLEAR OF THE ROCKS WITH ARMS RAISED!

THE BRITISHERS FORTRESS [illegible] THE NIGHT THEIR WEAPONS WERE REMOVED, BUT THEY STILL HAD SHOVELS WITH WHICH TO BURY THEIR DEAD.

[illegible] FIGHTING?

ANGRY AT THE LOSS OF HIS ARMOURED CAR AND THE CASUALTIES CAUSED BY THE HANDFUL OF BRITISH THE GERMAN COLONEL SENT FOR CAPTAIN EVANS.

I'M SORRY BUT I CAN'T GIVE YOU THE INFORMATION YOU REQUIRE

VERY WELL, CAPTAIN, IF THAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE I SHALL DO NOTHING TO HELP YOU. YOU MUST MANAGE WITH THE FOOD YOU HAVE, AND TOMORROW YOU MARCH BACK THE WAY YOU CAME.

Chapter 3. DEATH-OR CAPTIVITY

THE NEXT MORNING THE GERMAN COMMANDING OFFICER CARRIED OUT HIS THREAT. AN HOUR AFTER DAWN, THE SMALL BRITISH CONTINGENT BEGAN THE WEARY WALK BACK

SCHNELL! YOU ENGLANDERS MUST MARCH FASTER!

'S NIBS S DON' 'IS NLT! IF 'E DOESN'T DECIDE TO SHOOT US SOON, WE'LL GET A LIFT, YOU SEE!

BUT NO LIFT IN THE GERMAN LORRIES WAS FORTHCOMING A THOROUGHLY UNPLEASANT HOUR DRAGGED BY, AND THEN . . .

THE ENGLANDER TRUCK, HERR KOMMANDANT PERHAPS WE CAN USE IT!

HALT!

SURROUNDED BY THEIR GUARDS, THE BRITISH WERE HALTED CLOSE TO THE BROKEN DOWN TRUCK WHILE A BRIEF INSPECTION WAS MADE.
A MINOR REPAIR IS NEEDED HERR KOMMANDANT. I THINK WE CAN GET HER GOING
IT DON'T TAKE 'IM LONG TO SPOT WHERE CUT THE RADIATOR HOSE.
THE COLONEL SWUNG ROUND IMPERIOUSLY ON THE PRISONERS . . .
YOU ENGLANDERS WILL TRAVEL IN THIS TRUCK. STEP FORWARD THE MAN WHO DROVE IT HERE, AND TAKE CHARGE OF IT . . .
WHAT? TAKE OVER THAT OLD JALOPY AGAIN? NOT LIKELY!

NO ONE MOVED ~ AND THE GERMAN'S FACE DARKENED WITH ANGER . .
STEP FORWARD ORDER YOU~OR YOU ALL ALL BE REQUIRED TO DOUBLE-MARCH THOSE AND FALL OUT I'LL BE SHOT
IN THE FACE OF THAT THREAT, O. PEI STEPPED FORWARD WITH AN ILL GRACE HE FITTED THE NEW NOSE AND TORQUED UP THE RADIATOR
BETTER MOVE UP THAT RADIATOR IF YOU CAN'T GO TO BE A RIGHT SQUEEZE FOR ALL OF US
FIRST TIME I'VE DRIVEN A BLACK MARIA

THE COLUMN HAD NOT BEEN UNDER WAY MANY MINUTES WHEN BRITISH ARTILLERY TO THE NORTH EAST OPENED UPON IT

WONDER THE BUZZARD WAS IN SUCH A HURRY TO BE ON HIS WAY HE MUST HAVE HAD A WARNING BY RADIO

PUT YOUR FOOT DOWN IF YOUR GUNNERS ARE ON TO US?

SOON BRITISH SHELLS WERE BURSTING FAR TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE UNDER FIRE FROM YOUR OWN GUNS, ENGLANDER

INCOMFORTABLE, MATE THEY'RE A SIGHT MORE ACCURATE THAN YOUR GUNNERS

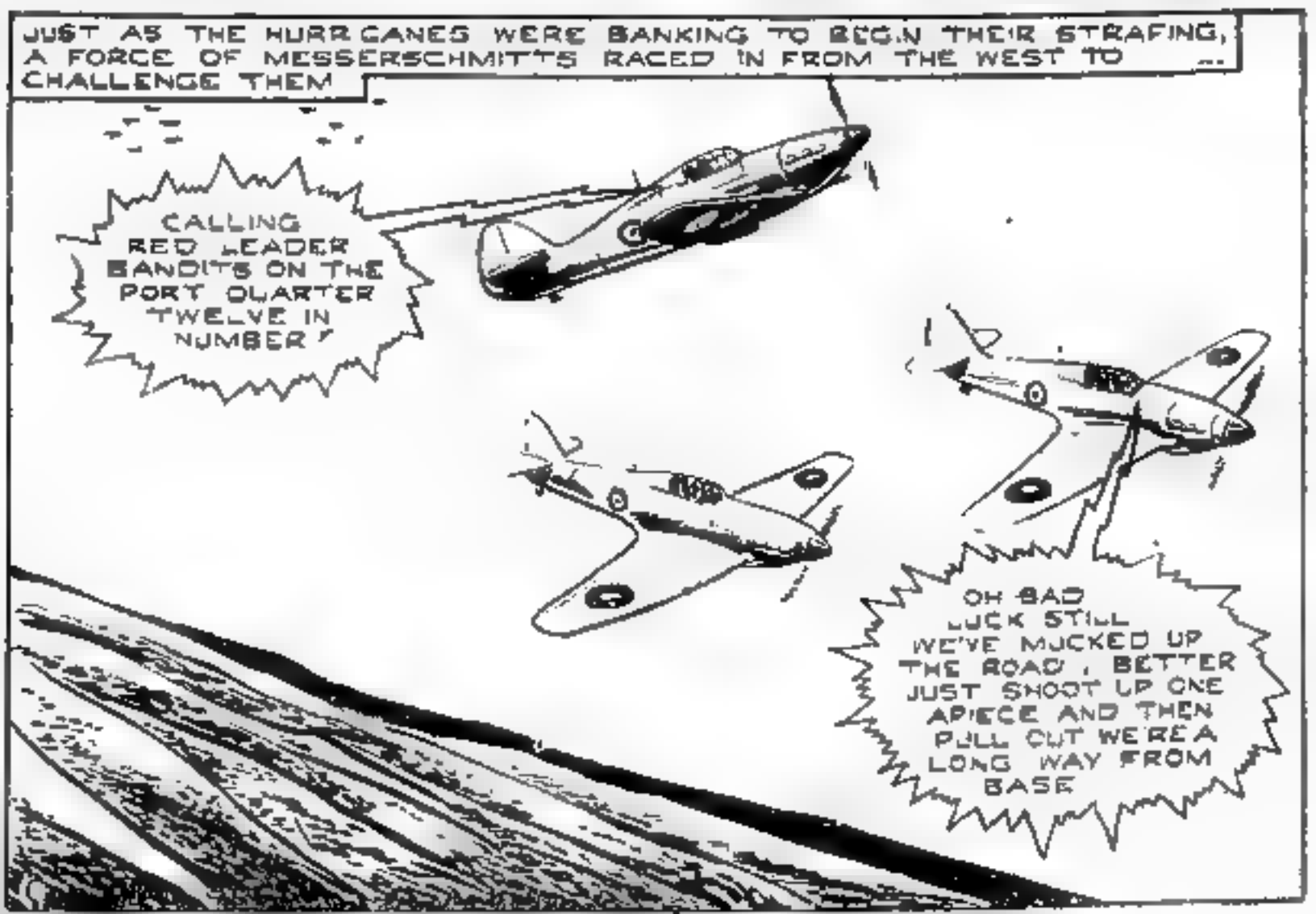
BEFORE THE COLUMN COULD RUN OUT OF RANGE, THE BRITISH ARTILLERY SCORED A DIRECT HIT ON THE VERY LAST TRUCK
BUT ROCKING AND BUMPING AT SPEED, THE COLUMN SOON RAN CLEAR OF THE RANGE OF THE ARTILLERY. SOME TIME LATER, IT STARTED TO CLIMB UP A NARROW, WINDING ROAD OF SOLID ROCK.
WOULDN'T DO TO MEET ANY B.G. STUFF COMIN THE OTHER WAY THERES HARDLY ROOM FOR TWO TO PASS
YES CLIMBING THE ESCARPMENT IS ALWAYS A WICKED JOB. IT'S A WONDER TO ME THE TRUCK HASN'T BOILED UP AGAIN BEFORE NOW

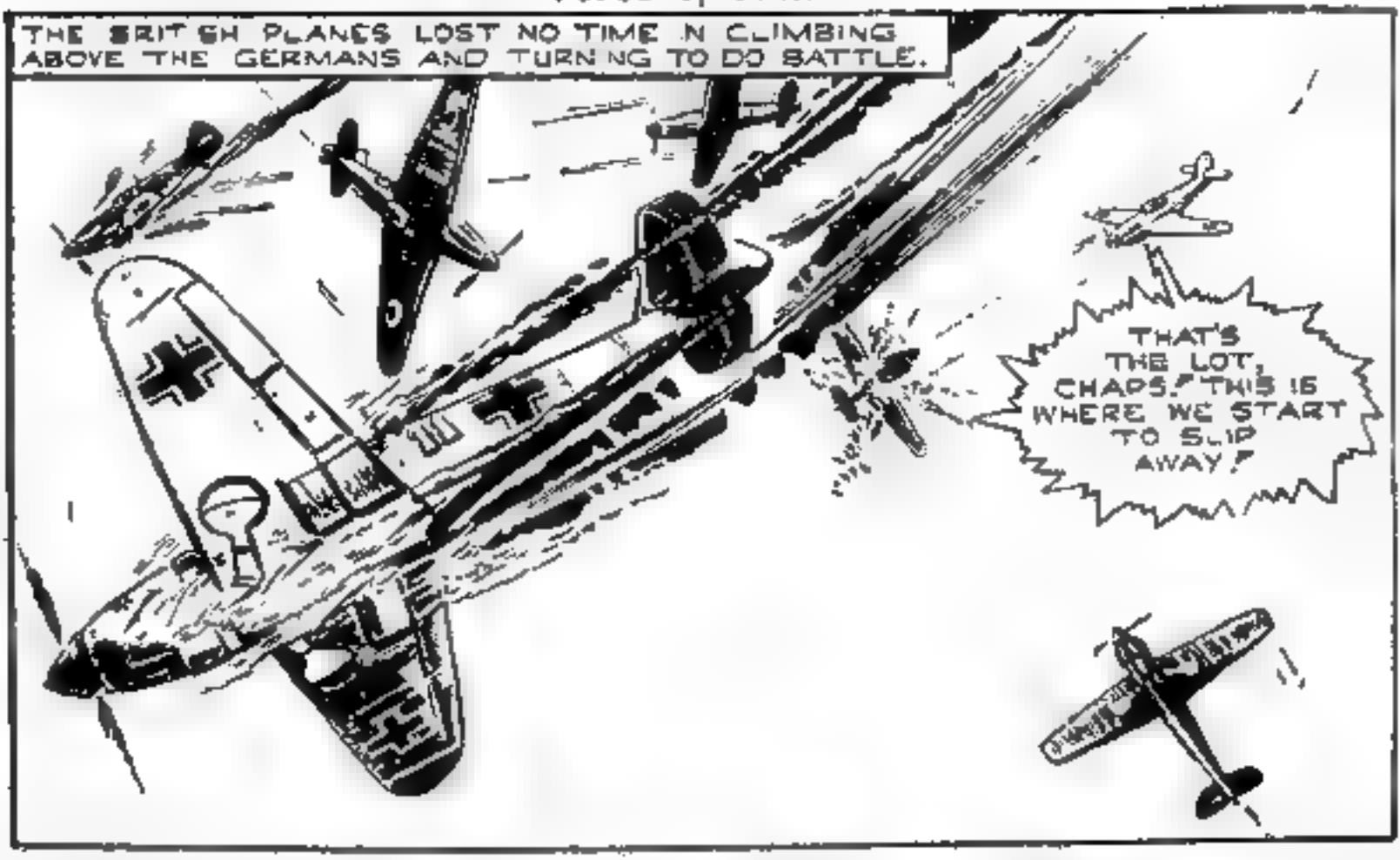
BOXED IN THE HOTHOUSE ATMOSPHERE OF HIS CAB, DUFFY LITERALLY DROPPED PERSPIRATION.
THIS WOULD BE AN AWKWARD SPOT FOR THE OLD BUS TO BREAK DOWN
A MOMENT LATER, ON A SHARPLY ANGLED BEND, THE ENGINE STALLED AFTER A FIERCE GEAR CHANGE
START HER UP, ENGLANDER! THE OBERST WILL BE FURIOUS AT THE DELAY!
GET THAT ACCURSED BRITISH TRUCK MOVING. IT'S HOLDING UP THE WHOLE COLUMN!

TAKING HIS TIME, DUFFY GOT OUT OF HIS CAB AND LIFTED THE BONNET, WHICH HE KNEW ONLY TOO WELL WAS QUITE UNNECESSARY
GET THIS MONSTROSITY OF A TRUCK MOVING, YOU IDLE DOG OF AN ENGLANDER
FEIGNING BEWILDERMENT, DUFFY GOT BACK IN HIS CAB AND STARTED THE ENGINE AGAIN. THE ARMOURED CAR WAS BY THIS TIME OUT OF SIGHT.
LOOK, SIR, PLANES HEADING THIS WAY. THEY SHOULD BE THINGS UP A BIT
YES, AND THEY'RE BRITISH. NO DOUBT OF
THIS SHOULD GIVE THE OLD JERRY A HEART ATTACK

SNARLED ORDERS ECHOED UP AND DOWN THE SNAKING ROAD. A QUICK GLANCE IN HIS WING MIRROR TOLD DUFFY THE REST OF THE CONVOY HAD STOPPED. THE GUARD DID NOT SEEM TO HAVE NOTICED. DUFFY DROVE ON...
RED LEADER HERE. THE PLAN IS STRAIGHTFORWARD. WE BLOCK THE ROAD AHEAD WITH BOMBING, THEN BEETLE BACK AND STRAFE THE JERRIES AT OUR LEISURE!
COMPLETELY DISREGARDING THE GERMAN ACK-ACK, THE BRITISH PILOTS GRIMLY CARRIED OUT THEIR PLAN.
'ELLO! THAT WAS A GOOD SHOT... TOO GOOD! LOOKS AS IF IT WILL STOP US FROM NIPPIN THROUGH AND AWAY!

RELUCTANTLY HE BROUGHT THE TRUCK TO A HALT AT THE EDGE OF THE CRATER...
HALT, ENGLANDER! THE OTHERS THEY ARE NOT WITH US!
ALL RIGHT, MATE. SHE'S STOPPED OF 'ER OWN ACCORD.


JUST AS THE HURRICANES WERE BANKING TO BEGIN THEIR STRAFING, A FORCE OF MESSERSCHMITTS RACED IN FROM THE WEST TO ... CHALLENGE THEM
CALLING RED LEADER BANDITS ON THE PORT QUARTER TWELVE IN NUMBER!
OH BAD LUCK STILL WE'VE MUCKED UP THE ROAD, BETTER JUST SHOOT UP ONE APIECE AND THEN PULL OUT WE'RE A LONG WAY FROM BASE


THE BRITISH PLANES LOST NO TIME IN CLIMBING ABOVE THE GERMANS AND TURNING TO DO BATTLE.
THAT'S THE LOT, CHAPS. THIS IS WHERE WE START TO SLIP AWAY!

MEANWHILE, DUFFY HAD CLAMBERED DOWN FROM HIS CAB TO GET A BETTER VIEW OF THE AIR BATTLE
GET THE TRUCK MOVING, ENGLANDER THE HERR OBERST IS ALMOST UP WITH US!
AVE A GO YOURSELF, KRAUT SHE'S PACKED UP AGAIN—THAT'S WHY WE ABANDONED 'ER BEFORE.

THE GUARD LOOKED FOR A MOMENT AS THOUGH HE WOULD LIKE TO SHOOT DUFFY – BUT JUST THEN THE STAFF CAR PULLED TO A HALT CLOSE BY

SHE'S PACKED IN AGAIN SIR – AND YOU CHAPS MAY AVE TO WALK IN CASE GET A CHANCE TO NIP AWAY, I'M SAYING MY GOODBYES NOW.

GOOD LUCK DUFFY MIND YOU DON'T GET YOURSELF SHOT HOUGH

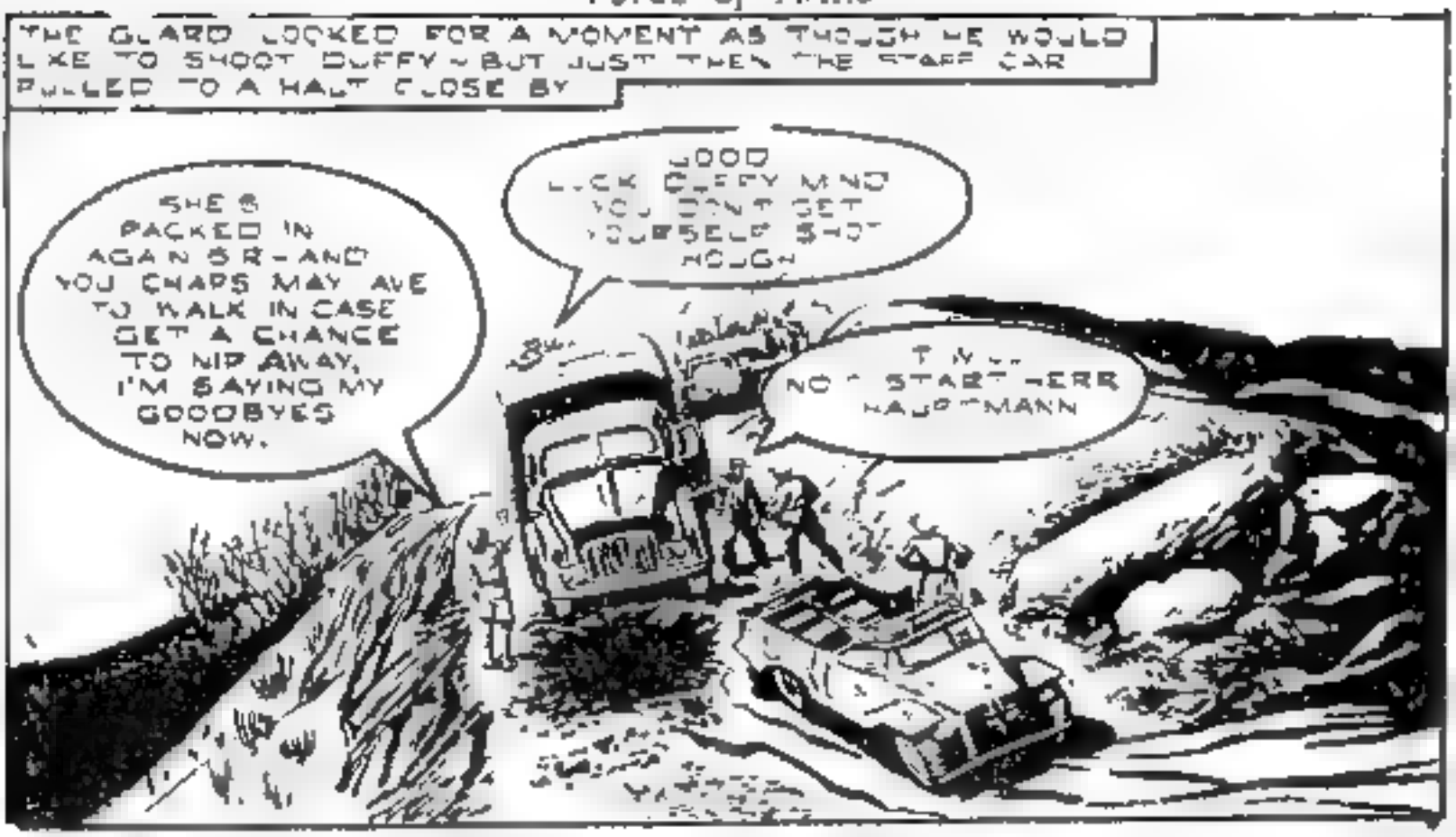
IT WILL NOT START HERR HAUPTMANN

BY THIS TIME THE GERMAN COLONEL WAS AT THE END OF HIS PATIENCE WITH THE BRITISH TRUCK AND HIS PRISONERS

UPE OUD DUFFY KNOWS WHAT ES DOIN'?

THE ENGLANDERS WILL MARCH FROM NOW ON? RUN THIS ABOMINATION BACK OUT OF THE WAY?

WE'LL SOON SEE.



DUFFY, WHO ALWAYS TIRED QUICKLY OF TAKING ORDERS, HAD DECIDED TO MAKE A RECKLESS DOOR DIE ESCAPE BID.
GET THAT TRUCK MOVING, YOU—YOU...
HEY ADOLF—GUIDE ME BACK, WILL YER? OLD HERMANN IS IN AN TURRY!
SILENCE, ENGLANDER, OR YOU'LL FEEL THE WEIGHT OF MY SCHMEISSER BUTT!
BUT THE FUMING GUARD DID GO ROUND THE BACK AND DUFFY RELEASED THE HAND BRAKE.
DON'T LIKE DOIN THIS TO A TRUCK BUT MIXED UP WITH BEIN PUSHED AROUND BY THESE LERRIES
DUFFY TOOK ONE QUICK GLANCE AT THE PERILOUS SLOPE BESIDE THE TRACK, THEN LOOKED AWAY BEFORE HIS RESOLUTION COULD WEAKEN, HE SWUNG OVER THE WHEEL AND SLIPPED HIS FOOT OFF THE BRAKE.
YOU CRAZY FOOL!

THE TRUCK ROCKETED DOWN THE SLOPE AMIDST AN AVALANCHE OF SMALL ROCKS. HIT A BOULDER AND SOMERSAULTED LIKE A CHILD'S TOY A SMALL FIGURE WAS FLUNG CLEAR . . .

STARTLED BRITISH AND GERMANS RUSHED TO THE EDGE OF THE ROCK ROAD, STARING AGHAST DOWN THE BARREN SLOPE . . .
. . . NOT A SIGN OF OLD DUFFY!
HIMMEL! THE MADMAN HAS KILLED HIMSELF!

THE HARSH VOICE OF THE GERMANS' LEADER DROVE THE BRITISHERS BACK INTO LINE. ALTHOUGH THE PRISONERS DID NOT RELISH THE IDEA OF MARCHING AGAIN, NONE OF THEM OFFERED A WORD OF CRITICISM FOR DUFFY'S RECKLESS ACTION.
BY JUPITER! THAT CHAP DUFFY DESERVED TO GET AWAY WITH THAT EFFORT I'LL SEE HE GETS A FIRST-CLASS MENTION—IF WE SURVIVE
AT LAST WE ARE RID OF THAT ACCURSED TRUCK AND ITS INSOLENT DRIVER NOW, PERHAPS, WE CAN GET CLEAR OF THE ESCARPMENT WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY

Chapter 4. ENEMY MARKINGS

THE ENEMY COLUMN RESUMED ITS PROGRESS AND SILENCE CAME TO THAT VIOLENT SCENE BUT A MERE TWO MILES AWAY A STRANGE PARTY OF TRAVELLERS WAS RESTING

FEAR THE PRISONERS MAY DIE BEFORE OUR NEXT PRAYER TO ALLAH IF WE DON'T MEET SOME GERMANS

YOU ARE RIGHT SIDI ABOUL. IT WOULD BE A PITY TO MISS THE REWARD MONEY AFTER BRINGING THEM THIS FAR

AS CRUEL AS THE SLAVE TRADERS OF OLD - THE ARABS WERE MEN WHO DEALT IN HUMAN LIVES, THE LIVES OF ALLIED SOLDIERS WHOM THEY HAD MANAGED TO CAPTURE

ARCHIE [illegible] JACKAL

THE CARAVAN RESTARTED - AND THE ARABS SET A SLOWER PACE THAN PREVIOUSLY. EVEN THEN IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR THEIR EXHAUSTED PRISONERS TO KEEP UP WITH THEM. . .
THE JERRIES'LL BE ANGELS AFTER THIS MOB, COBBER!
YOU'RE DARNED RIGHT, SPORT., MY EYES KEEP PLAYIN' TRICKS, THOUGH. KEEP THINKIN THAT HUMP OF ROCK IS THE SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE

TWO ENERGY-SAPPING HOURS LATER, THE LEADING CAMELS LUMBERED UPON THE SCENE OF THE SUICIDAL PLUNGE OF DUFFY'S TRUCK
LOOK HAFEEZ THAT OBJECT OVER THERE IS A TRUCK IS IT NOT?
BY ALLAH, IT SEEMS

CLOSE TO THE ROOTS OF THE PALM TREES SUPPORTING THE TRUCK, ONE OF THE ARABS DISCOVERED THE PROSTRATE FIGURE OF
AND HERE IS THE TRUCK'S DRIVER SO ABOUT BUT HE SEEMS TO BE BRITISH—THOUGH THE TRUCK HAS THE GERMAN MARKING ON IT

THE STOUT ABOUL LOST NO TIME IN DISMOUNTING AND GIVING THE BATTERED TRUCK A LOOK OVER WHILE THE OTHER ARAB EXAMINED THE SOLDIER
HE BREATHES I THINK WE MIGHT RISK A FEW PRECIOUS DROPS OF WATER ON HIM
I WONDER IF HE COULD GET THE TRUCK TO WORK—THEN WE COULD SELL IT AS WELL AS THESE WEAPONS.

THE TRICKLE OF WATER REVIVED DUFFY'S SCATTERED SENSES, HIS EYES FLICKERED OPEN AND HE SAT UP SLOWLY, STARING IN SURPRISE AT THE ALMOST UNDAMAGED TRUCK
THANKS CHUM THIS MIGHT'VE BEEN MY LAST RESTING PLACE IF YOU HADN'T COME ALONG
I THINK YOU ARE LUCKY TO BE ALIVE!

DUFFY QUICKLY REALISED THAT BY A MIRACLE HE HAD NO BONES BROKEN. NOT KNOWING WHAT UNSCRUPULOUS VILLAINS HE HAD TO DEAL WITH, HE WARMED TOWARDS THE ARABS.
TELL ME, ENGLISHMAN, DO YOU THINK YOU COULD GET THIS TRUCK TO WORK?
WELL, I FEEL A BIT SHAKY YET, BUT I'LL LOOK IT OVER SHORTLY. I DON'T MIND TINKERIN' WITH 'ER NOW THE JERRIES 'AVE GONE.

APPARENTLY SATISFIED FOR THE MOMENT, THE ARAB LEADERS MOVED AWAY THEN DUFFY CAUGHT SIGHT OF THE ALLIED PRISONERS FOR THE FIRST TIME
JUMPIN' JERRIED EELS! AM I SEEIN' THINGS? WHA THE BLAZES GOES ON ERE?
THE FOUR PRISONERS FLOPPED ON THE SAND BESIDE HIM AND HE COULD SCARCELY GRASP THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WHAT THEY TOLD HIM.
...YOU MEAN THESE ARABS ARE IN THE WAR THEN?
SURE! THEY'RE IN IT FOR WHAT THEY CAN GET OUT OF IT NOW YOU'RE THEIR PRISONER, SAME AS WE ARE. THEY'RE GON' TO COLLECT REWARD MONEY FOR US FROM THE JERR'ES
IT'S TOO BAD AFTER THE ESCAPE YOU'VE HAD, SPORT E YOU'D KNOW, YOU COULD'VE PLAYED POSSUM TILL THEY'D GONE BY

WHY WERE THEY SO INTERESTED IN GETTIN' THE TRUCK ON THE MOVE AGAIN?
THAT'S EASY, SPORT THEY WANT YOU TO GIVE US A ROE IN IT, OTHERWISE WE'LL BE DEAD BEFORE THEY CAN CLAIM THEIR REWARD MONEY
THIS ENGLISH DRIVER HE IS OUT OF THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE EH, HAFEEZ?

BECAUSE OF THE WEARY PRISONERS DESPERATE NEEDS, DUFFY FOUGHT DOWN HIS INSTINCT NOT TO HELP THE ARABS...
WELL LOOKS LIKE I'M STILL LUMBERED WITH THE OLD BUS THE FRONT SUSPENSION'S TAKEN A BIT OF A BEATIN AND THE FEED SYSTEM WILL NEED LOOKIN' INTO AGAIN BUT I RECKON SHE'LL STILL GO

ON HEARING HIS REPORT, THE ARABS DISPLAYED UNEXPECTED ENERGY IN CLEARING A WAY TO BRING THE TRUCK DOWN ON THE LEVEL.
I 'OPE SHE DON'T ROLL OVER THE EDGE BEFORE WE'RE READY!
A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE BATTERED VEHICLE LOLTED DOWN ON TO LEVEL EARTH.
THAT'S IT, LADS YOU CAN SCRAMBLE IN THE BACK SOON AS YOU LIKE. I'LL 'AVE 'ER ROLLIN' IN NO TIME!
I WISH HE WOULDN'T SOUND SO PLEASED. IT ISN'T AS IF WE'RE GOIN' ON LEAVE!

HALF AN HOUR LATER, THEY MOVED OFF AGAIN AT A MODEST TEN MILES AN HOUR. THE PRISONERS HAD BEEN UNITED, BUT THE VILLAINOUS HAFEEZ HAD MOVED INTO THE CAB HUGGING A MACHINE-PISTOL.
THINK WE'RE ANY BETTER OFF, COBBER?
I DOUBT IT THIS OLD JALOPY'S HOTTER'N BLAZES AND ANYWAY, WE'RE STILL BOOKED FOR THE P.O.W. CAGE.

THEY HALTED AT MIDDAY AND THE SUN BEAT DOWN UPON THE TRUCK UNTIL IT BECAME LIKE AN OVEN INSIDE. THERE HAD BEEN NO SIGN OF THE GERMANS - AND DUFFY HAD DELIBERATELY NEGLECTED TO TELL THE ARABS OF THE PROXIMITY OF THE ENEMY COLUMN.
YOU KNOW WHAT, COBBER, I FIGURE WE'RE ON THE WAY TO TIMBUKTU!
MAYBE - MAYBE NOT! WE'RE NOT BEHIND BARBED WIRE YET, THOUGH.

WEARILY THE PRISONERS CLIMBED ABOARD AGAIN. DUFFY STARTED THE ENGINE AND THEN FOOLED WITH THE CONTROLS A TH START ING SLOWNESS. THE ENGINE BACK-FIRED... AND THE CAMELS TOOK FRIGHT
"THAT SHOOK 'EM"
CURSE THAT MEDDLESOME DRIVER

DUFFY SWUNG ROUND - GRABBED THE SURPRISED HAFEEZ BY THE SHOULDER AND SLAMMED A BONE-CRACKING RIGHT FIST TO HIS CHIN
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU

SWIFTLY BUNDLING THE LIMP ARAB OUT OF THE CAB, HE STABBED HIS FOOT DOWN HARD ON THE ACCELERATOR

'ANG ON, YO BLOKES IN THE BACK, 'ERE WE GO! NEXT STOP CAIRO!

ITS ENGINE ROARING AND CLATTERING PROTESTINGLY, THE BATTERED TRUCK RACED ACROSS THE OPEN DESERT LEAVING THEIR FORMER CAPTORS FAR BEHIND THEN, LATE IN THE AFTERNOON, WHEN THEY WERE MAKING FOR ANOTHER WATER HOLE WHICH THEY HAD SIGHTED, THE TRUCK BOILED UP AGAIN.

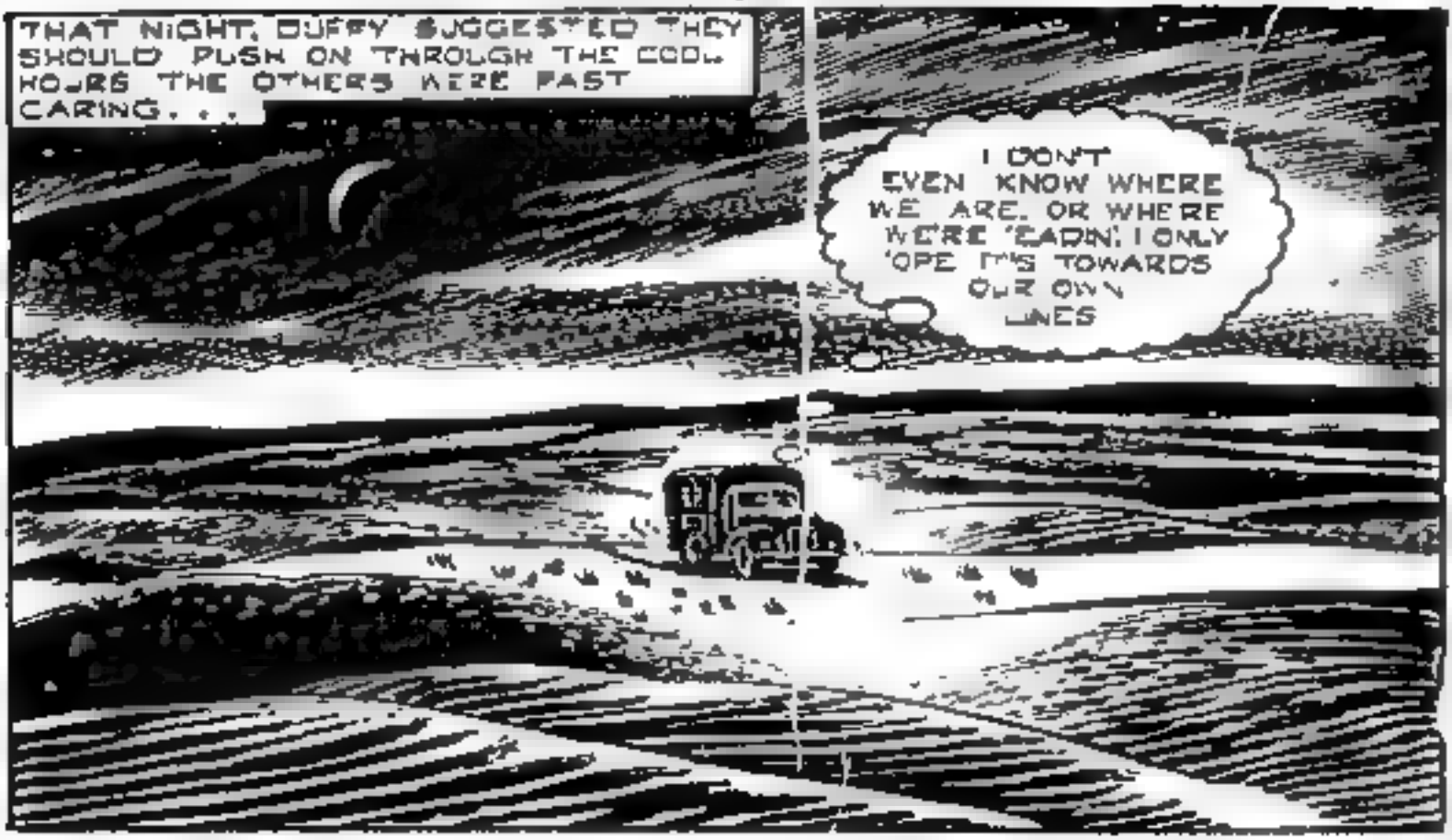
DON'T LET THAT DRINKIN' WATER BOIL AWAY IT'S THE LAST IF DON'T FIND ANY BETTER SHARE IT BETWEEN YOU AND THE DATES AND BISCUITS I'LL GET BACK AS SOON AS CAN.

[illegible]

THE WATER HOLE WAS LESS THAN A MILE AWAY, BUT THE SAND WAS SOFT AND DUFFY FOUND THE GOING HARD
DON'T THINK MUCH OF THAT POOR INDIAN'S CHANCES IF WE DON'T AVE A BIT O LUCK SOON

WITH AN EFFORT, HE REACHED THE HOLE, THANKFUL THAT IT HAD NOT DRIED OUT COMPLETELY. BUT WHEN HE THREW HIMSELF DOWN TO DRINK, HE NOTICED THE BODY OF A DEAD CAMEL HALF OUT OF THE WATER.
POLLUTED WATER! JUST OUR BLOOMIN' LUCK... WELL, I SUPPOSE THE TRUCK WILL BE ABLE TO STOMACH 'IT AN THERE'S PLENTY OF DATES ABOUT

AFTER RESTING FOR HALF AN HOUR, HE STRUGGLED BACK TO THE TRUCK TO FIND THE TWO FITTEST MEN DIGGING A SHALLOW GRAVE.
'M AFRAID THE INDIAN HAS DIED.'
THE POOR BLIGHTER CAME A LONG WAY TO FIGHT ERE, 'E DESERVED A BETTER FATE


THAT NIGHT, DUFFY SUGGESTED THEY SHOULD PUSH ON THROUGH THE COOL HOURS THE OTHERS WERE FAST CARING...
I DONT EVEN KNOW WHERE WE ARE, OR WHERE WE'RE 'EADIN'. I ONLY 'OPE IT'S TOWARDS OUR OWN LINES

DUFFY DROVE ON THROUGH THE NIGHT WITH FREQUENT HALTS TO ALLOW THE TRUCK'S RADIATOR TO COOL DOWN - AND INTO DAYLIGHT, GEARS GRINDING AND ENGINE ROARING. HIS BRAIN WAS NUMBED WITH EXHAUSTION AND HE HAD THE GREATEST DIFFICULTY IN KEEPING HIS EYES OPEN.
GREAT SUFFERIN' CATS! I DROPPED OFF TO SLEEP!
WHAT THE HECK'S GOIN' ON, SPORT? HEY, LOOK - WATER!

THIS TIME THE WATER WAS NOT POLLUTED AND SHOUTING HYSTERICALLY, THE WHOLE PARTY REVELLED IN ITS LUXURY
MY OH MY NEVER THOUGHT I'D EVER GET SO EXCITED ABOUT ANY DRINK AS TAME AS WATER!
ALL WE WANT NOW IS A SPOT OF REAL GRUB!

WHEN THE TRAVEL-WORN MEN HAD BATHED AND DRUNK THEIR FILL HOWEVER, THE EXCITEMENT DRAINED OUT OF THEM QUITE SOON DISCOVERED THAT HE HAD A NEW PROBLEM ON HIS HANDS
LET'S FACE IT DUFFY WE'RE STILL HOPELESSLY LOST AND THERE'S LITTLE CHANCE OF FINDING OUR WAY BACK TO THE ALLIED LINES SO IT'S UP TO THE SAVE TO YOU. THE REST OF US HAVE DECIDED TO STAY HERE AND TAKE OUR CHANCE
YOU'RE PRETTY FLUSTERED

NOTHING DUFFY SAID HAD ANY EFFECT ON THE OTHERS BUT HE WAS UNWILLING TO LEAVE THEM AND WHILE THEY SLEPT HE TRED TO PUT THE TRUCK'S ENGINE IN ORDER TWO HOURS PASSED AND THEN...

HEY, DUFFY! A PLANE! IT'S ONE OF OURS, SNIT

IS AN ALLIATE DOIN A RECCE SUPPOSE!

WORKING WITH FEVERISH HASTE, DUFFY BROKE UP THE TRUCK'S SPLINTERED TAILBOARD AFTER TIPPING PETROL OVER IT HE LIT IT AND STOOD BACK HOPEFULLY

IT'S NOT A BIT OF GOOD SHOUTING WE MIGHT AS WELL SAVE OUR BREATH!

A SMALL FIRE WON'T SHOW UP MUCH IN THIS BRIGHT SUNLIGHT

FIVE NERVE-WRACKING MINUTES PASSED BEFORE THE PLANE TURNED AND WENT OUT OF THEIR LIVES, THE SAME WAY AS IT HAD ARRIVED

I'M REAL SORRY ABOUT THAT, MATES

AW FORGET IT IT WAS A LONG CHANCE ANYWAYS

MAYBE WE SHOULD HAVE ALLOWED FRIEND DUFFY TO DRIVE US IN THAT DIRECTION LIKE HE WANTED TO

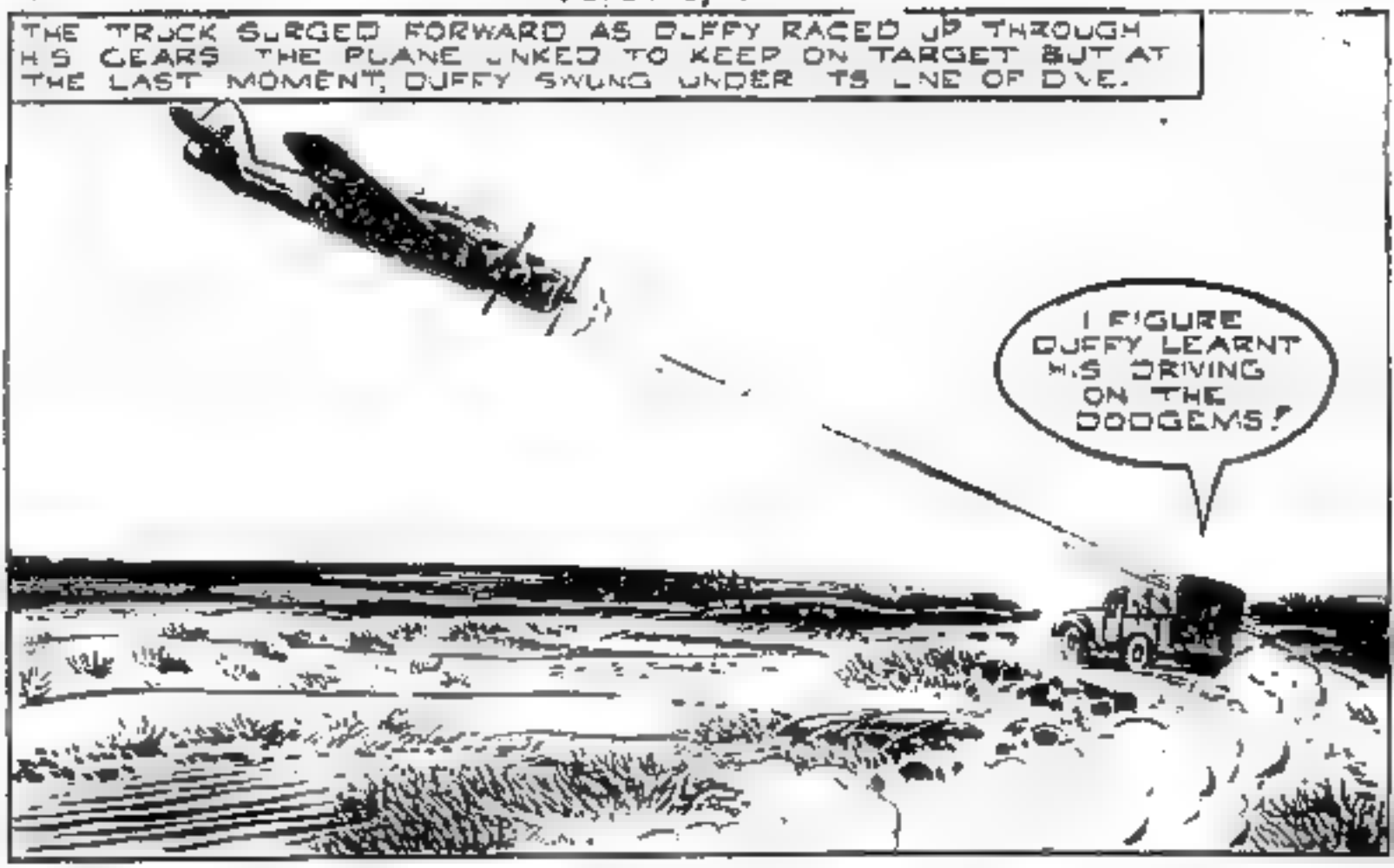
THUS, BECAUSE OF THEIR BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT, THE AUSSIES AND THE NDIAN RESOLVED TO ENTRUST THEIR FUTURE ONCE AGAIN TO THE TRUCK AND DUFFY ROBERTS.
ALL ABOARD, DUFF. DON'T FORGET WE WANT TO GET THERE BEFORE CLOSING TIME.
TALLY-O ERE WE GO! NEXT STOP THE RITZ, ME LOROS!

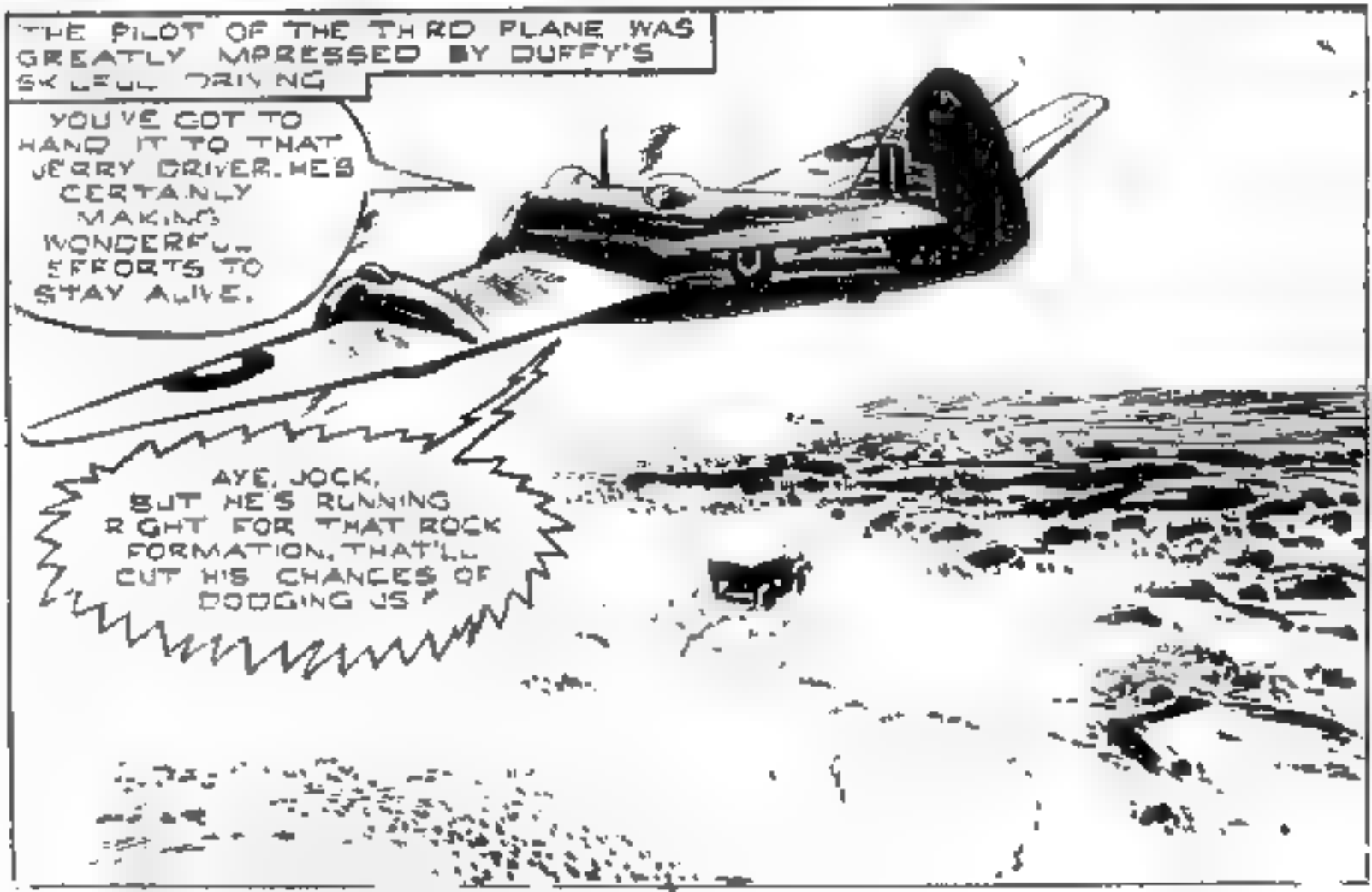
DUFFY DROVE STEADILY IN THE DIRECTION THE PLANE HAD TAKEN WHEN THE TERRAIN COARSENED TO CAVE-THORN HUMMOCKS AND SMALL BOULDERS, THE WOUNDED MAN MOVED INTO THE CAB WITH HIM.
PLANES DUFFY! OUR BOYS... TAKE A LOOK FOR YOURSELF!
AUSTRALIA
RIGHT YOJ ARE, DIGGER! WE OUGHT TO NIP OUT AN' GIVE 'EM A WAVE!

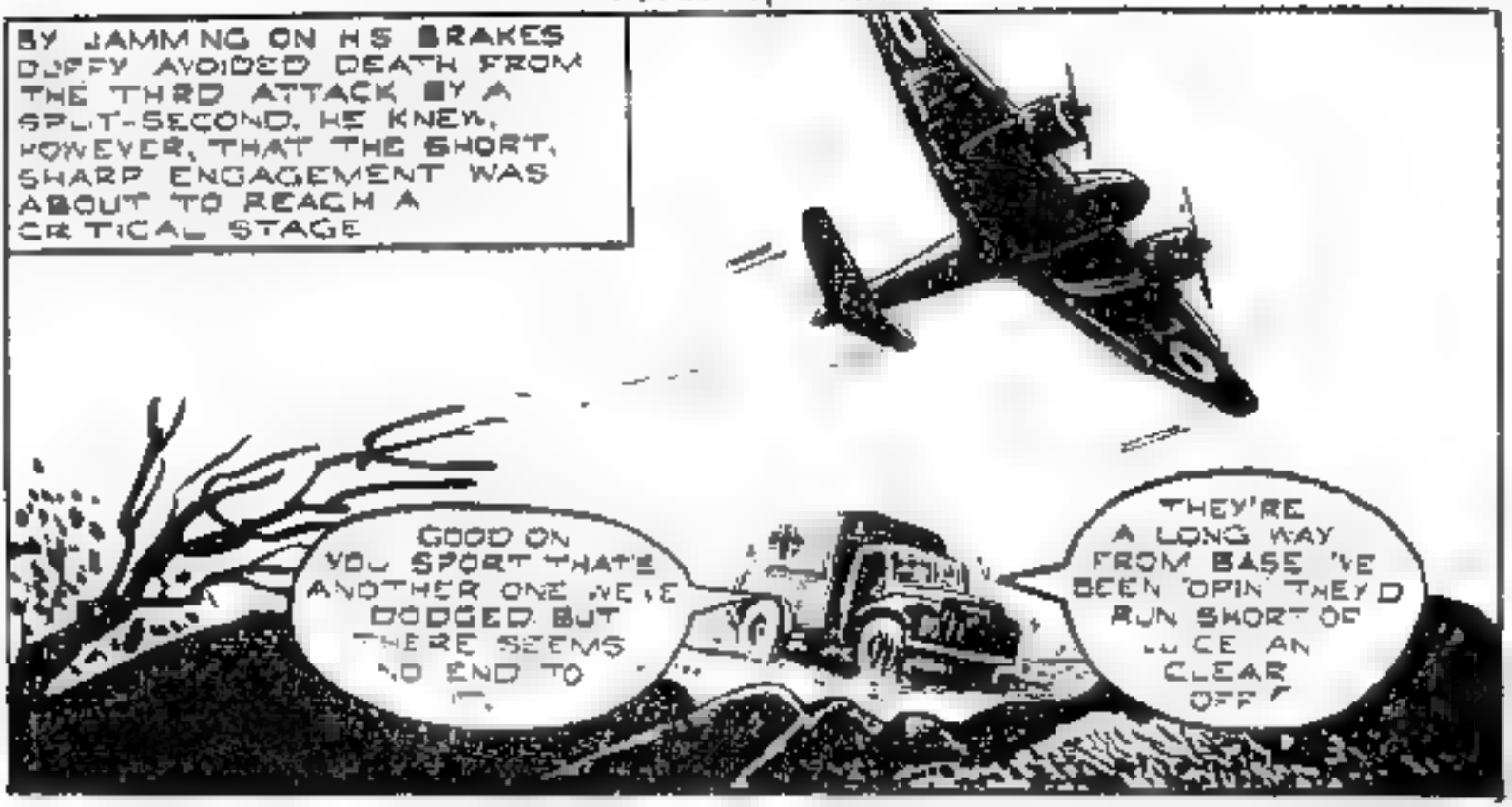
THEY DISMOUNTED AS THE THREE FIGHTER-BOMBERS BANKED AND HURTLED IN TOWARDS THEM.
THIS TAKES CARE OF EVERYTHING! THEY MUST'VE BEEN OUT LOOKIN' FOR US!
IT CERTAINLY SEEMS LIKE IT, MA'AM!

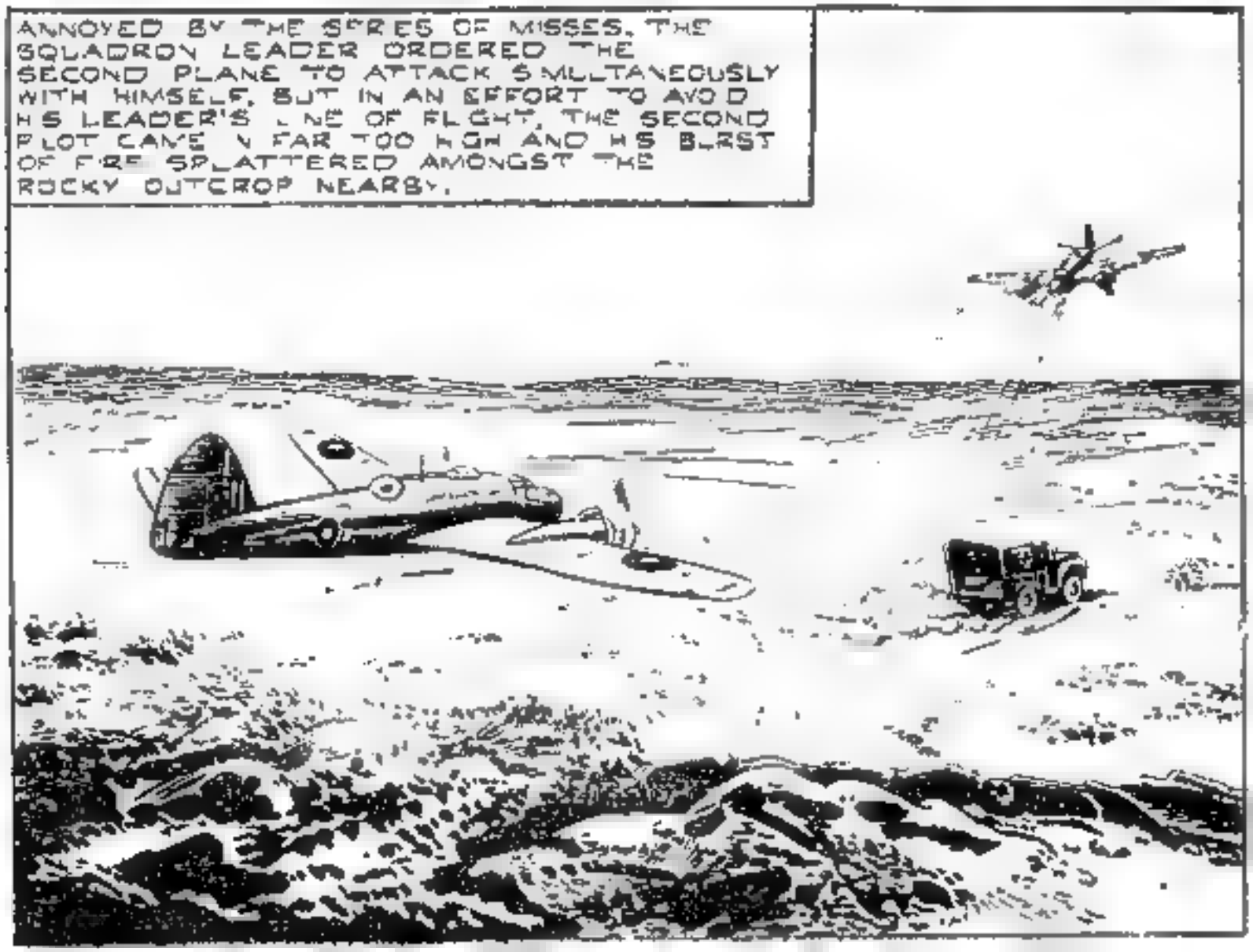
BUT SUDDENLY, ORANGE FLAME FLICKERED AT THE PLANE'S GUN PORTS AND BULLETS LASHED THE SAND ABOUT THEM. THEY WERE BEING ATTACKED
WHAT THE HECK?
IT'S THE JERRY MARKINGS ON THE TRUCK... THEY'VE TAKEN US FOR THE ENEMY!

THE BEAUFIGHER SWEPT BY OVERHEAD. INSTANTLY DUFFY SCRAMBLED TO HIS FEET AND BELLOWED FOR THE OTHERS TO GET BACK ON BOARD.
'ERE COMES ANOTHER! YOU IN THE BACK, GET DOWN FLAT!


THE TRUCK SURGED FORWARD AS DUFFY RACED UP THROUGH H.S GEARS THE PLANE SANKED TO KEEP ON TARGET BUT AT THE LAST MOMENT, DUFFY SWUNG UNDER TS LNE OF DVE.
I FIGURE DUFFY LEARNT H.S DRIVING ON THE DODGEMS!


THE PILOT OF THE THRD PLANE WAS GREATLY MPRESSED BY DUFFY'S SKLFUL DRIVNG
YOU'VE GOT TO HAND IT TO THAT JERRY DRIVER. HE'S CERTANLY MAKING WONDERFUL EFFORTS TO STAY ALIVE.
AYE, JOCK, BUT HE'S RUNNING RGHT FOR THAT ROCK FORMATION, THAT'LL CUT H'S CHANCES OF DODGING US!


BY JAMMING ON HIS BRAKES DUFFY AVOIDED DEATH FROM THE THIRD ATTACK BY A SPLIT-SECOND, HE KNEW, HOWEVER, THAT THE SHORT, SHARP ENGAGEMENT WAS ABOUT TO REACH A CRITICAL STAGE
GOOD ON YOU SPORT THAT'S ANOTHER ONE WE'VE DODGED BUT THERE SEEMS NO END TO IT.
THEY'RE A LONG WAY FROM BASE 'VE BEEN 'OPIN' THEY'D RUN SHORT OF ...CE AN CLEAR OFF


ANNOYED BY THE SERIES OF MISSES, THE SQUADRON LEADER ORDERED THE SECOND PLANE TO ATTACK SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH HIMSELF, BUT IN AN EFFORT TO AVOID HIS LEADER'S LINE OF FLIGHT, THE SECOND PILOT CAME IN FAR TOO HIGH AND HIS BURST OF FIRE SPLATTERED AMONGST THE ROCKY OUTCROP NEARBY.

SECONDS LATER, THE EAR-SHATTERING ROAR OF A TREMENDOUS EXPLOSION CAME FROM AMONGST THE ROCKS. . . AND THE PLANE WAS FLUNG SKYWARDS BY THE FORCE OF IT.
MUST BE A HIDDEN DUMP, THERE, TO GO UP LIKE THAT!
A JERRY DUMP AT THAT - FOR THOSE RAF BOYS NOT TO KNOW ABOUT IT!

AN EXCITED MESSAGE CRACKLED OUT FROM THE SQUADRON LEADER'S RADIO...

...LAY OFF THE TRUCK FOR NOW STAND BY TO BOMB THE EXPLOSION AREA. IT MUST BE THAT FORWARD DUMP FOR THE MAIN JERRY THRUST - THE ONE WE COULDN'T LOCATE!

SUPPOSE IT'S NO USE TRYING TO GET THE RAF ON THE RADIO?

THE WIRELESS WAS DUE THE LAST TIME IT WAS FIXED - BUT WE'LL TAKE A LOOK, IF THEY GIVE US A BREATHER. BUT EVEN SO, WE WON'T BE ABLE TO SPEAK DIRECT TO 'EM. WE DON'T WORK ON THEIR WAVE-LENGTH!

THE VIOLENT EVASIVE ACTION HAD BROUGHT THE ILL-USED TRUCK TO THE BOIL AGAIN AND DUFFY WAS FORCED TO ROLL TO A STOP LESS THAN A MILE AWAY WHILE THE AUSSIE REFILLED THE RADIATOR, DUFFY MADE A HURRIED SURVEY OF THE WIRELESS GEAR.

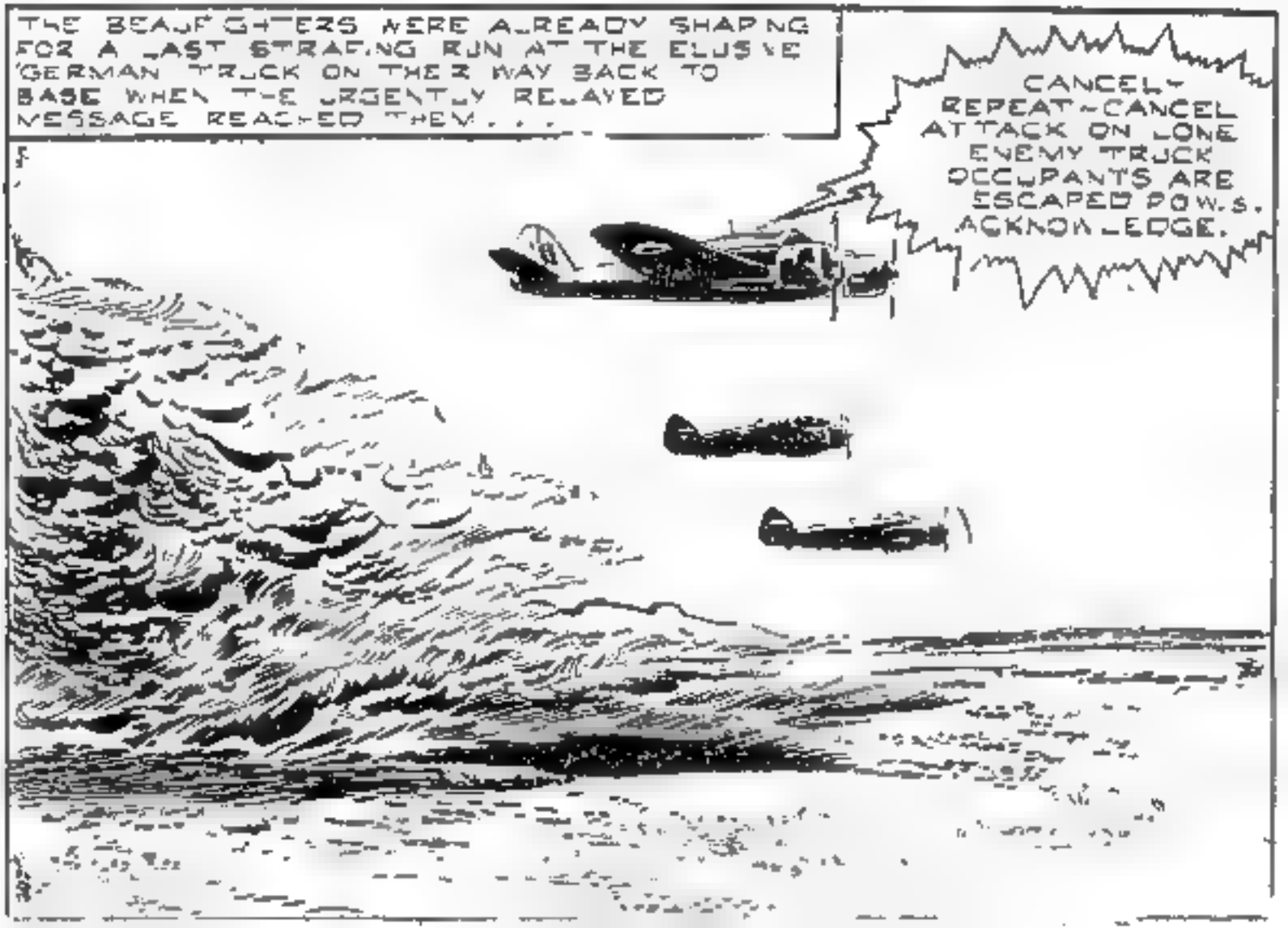
SOUNDS ALL RIGHT - MAYBE RUNNING THE TRUCK SO MUCH HAS CHARGED UP THE BATTERIES

HURRY IT, UP, DUFFY! I'VE GOT A HORRIBLE FEELING THEY'LL BE BACK!

WRACKING HIS BRAINS, DUFFY TRIED TO REMEMBER THE CALL SIGNS HE HAD HEARD THE SIGNALLER USE BEFORE THEY HAD BEEN OVER-RUN. BUT FAILED. SO...
HELLO THIS IS PRIVATE ROBERTS WE WERE CAPTURED BY JERRY AND ESCAPED IN A TRUCK WITH JERRY MARKINGS WE'RE BEING ATTACKED BY THREE BEAUFIGHTERS. IF YOU CAN HEAR ME GET 'EM TO LAY OFF, WILL YOU - OR THEY'LL GET US FOR SURE!
LOOKS LIKE THE RAID'S OVER - THEY'LL BE COMING BACK IN A MINUTE ..

TWENTY MILES AWAY, AN ASTONISHED SIGNALS WIRELESS OPERATOR LOOKED UP FROM HIS SET. . .
SIR - SOMEONE'S JUST COME THROUGH ON THE FORWARD LINK SAYS HE'S PRIVATE ROBERTS KNOWN DUFFY ROBERTS - HE WAS WITH CAPTAIN EVANS PARTY -
AND WE HAVEN'T HEARD FROM THEM FOR THREE DAYS!

THE OPERATOR REPEATED DUFFY'S DESPAIRING MESSAGE . . .
AND HE SAID THEY WERE DONE FOR UNLESS WE STOPPED THE BEAUFIGHTERS
AIR CONTROL ~ PRIORITY IMMEDIATE.


THE BEAUFIGHTERS WERE ALREADY SHAPING FOR A LAST STRAFING RUN AT THE ELUSIVE GERMAN TRUCK ON THEIR WAY BACK TO BASE WHEN THE URGENTLY RELAYED MESSAGE REACHED THEM . . .
CANCEL ~ REPEAT ~ CANCEL ATTACK ON LONE ENEMY TRUCK OCCUPANTS ARE ESCAPED P.O.W.S. ACKNOWLEDGE.

SHOCKED AT THE NEWS THAT THEY HAD BEEN SHOOTING UP THEIR OWN MEN, THE SQUADRON LEADER DIPPED HIS WINGS IN SALUTE AS HE ROARED LOW OVER THE SOLITARY TRUCK.
BRITISH, ARE YOU? WELL... WHEN I THINK OF THE RISKS YOU TOOK TO LEAD US ON TO THAT GERMAN DUMP I TAKE MY HAT OFF TO YOU, WHOEVER YOU ARE - AND WHEN MY REPORT GOES IN, I SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF THERE WASN'T A MEDAL IN IT FOR SOMEONE

DUFFY AND HIS COMPANIONS COULD SCARCELY BELIEVE THEIR EYES AS THE PLANES FLEW OFF TO DISAPPEAR OVER THE HORIZON. FERVENTLY, THEY CONGRATULATED EACH OTHER ON THEIR ESCAPE.
JEEPERS! THE MESSAGE MUST HAVE GOT THROUGH!
BONZER, DUFFY BOY! WE MADE IT!

AND WITH THAT, DUFFY TOOK HIS WEARY CHARGES ON BOARD FOR THE LAST TIME. FOLLOWING THE PLANES' ROUTE, THEY REACHED THE BRITISH LINES AN HOUR LATER.
THE RAF BOYS WARNED US TO LOOK OUT FOR YOU. WELCOME BACK.
HAVIN' A PARTY? I'LL SAY WE 'AVE. A PARTY WITHOUT GRUB. WE 'AVEN'T SEEN AN 'OT MEAL IN DAYS!
WE'LL SOON FIX YOU UP, LAD, NEVER FEAR AND WHILE YOU'RE EATING, WE'LL PAINT OUT THE JERRY MARKINGS ON YOUR TRUCK!

AND THAT WAS HOW PRIVATE DUFFY ROBERTS WON HIS MEDAL – FOR CONDUCT BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY THOUGH IF YOU ASKED DUFFY, HE'D SAY IT WAS FOR DRIVING A BROKEN DOWN JALOPY ON A ROUND TOUR OF LYBIA. THE FOLLOWING MORNING, BEFORE DUFFY RETURNED TO HIS UNIT, AN OFFICIAL ARMY PHOTOGRAPHER CAME TO TAKE A PICTURE OF HIM WITH THE TRUCK.

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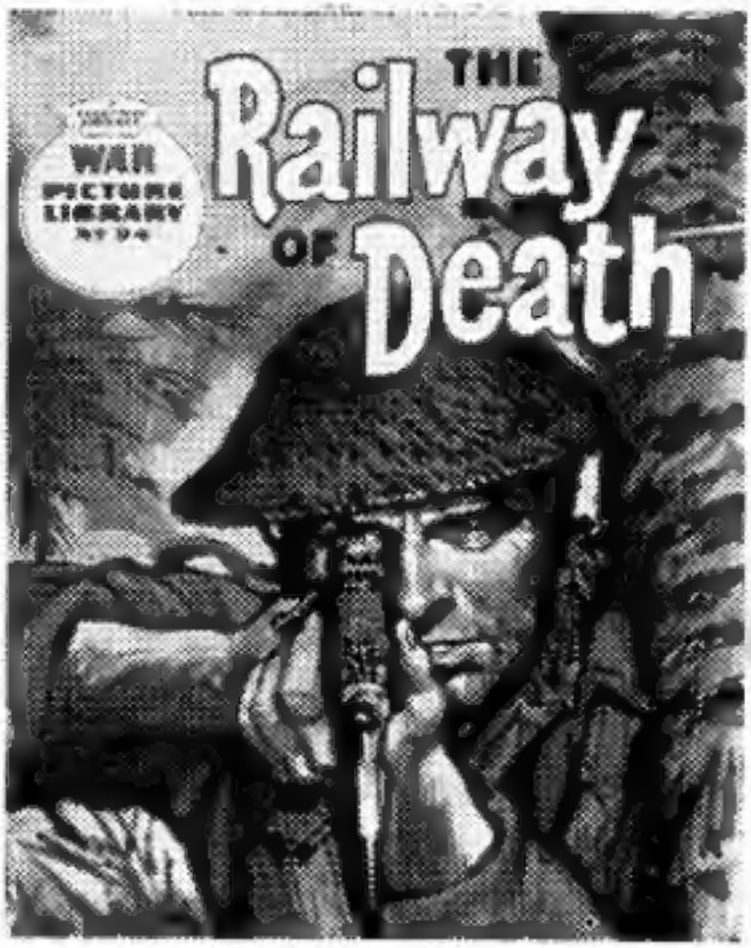

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